

mista del mundo natural) hacia los objeciones estrictamente científicas y nunca hacia la desconsideración intelectual o personal.

Todo buen libro, aparte de las aportaciones positivas y concretas que formule, debe sugerir al lector interrogantes o nuevas lecturas, muchas de las cuales superan el marco de la obra leída, pero que desbrozan el camino para nuevos trabajos; en eso consiste el avance de la disciplina. ¿La posición no darwiniana de Vilanova limitó su influencia sobre la siguiente generación de geólogos y paleontólogos? ¿Se continúa su labor pionera en Prehistoria en la obra de discípulos directos o indirectos?, si no es así ¿por qué?; la visión enciclopédica de Vilanova —y su énfasis en una disciplina «en desarrollo», como la Prehistoria— ¿coartó su influencia sobre terceros? Son preguntas que este magnífico estudio sobre Vilanova invita a plantearse. ■

Alfredo Baratas Díaz

orcid.org/0000-0001-8827-4767

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein and Pieter Verstraete, eds. **The imperfect historian. Disability histories in Europe**. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang; 2013, 280 p. ISBN 978-3-631-63659-6. € 46,70.

During the past decade, the history of disability has started to receive growing scholarly interest. The various contributions have taken part in the discussions initiated by sociologists and disability activists, attempting to untangle the attitudes towards physical and mental deviance, as well as the lived experiences of those with disabilities. Still a very young branch of historical studies, and utilizing a vast amount of source types and methodological approaches, disability histories are benefitting from —and requiring— interdisciplinary approaches that exceed the often artificial period limits. This article compilation is a welcomed addition to the discussion, presenting new methodological questions in fourteen enlightening case studies and a brief concluding remarks by Henri-Jacques Stiker. As the authors state in their introductory chapter, studies addressing the differences theoretical and methodological heterogeneity are very rare, and while empirical data should by no means become less important, meta-historical reflections are crucial for the development of the field. Moreover,

while the usage —and criticism— of the social model of disability has been prevalent in the disability history, the book also aims at presenting other theoretical approaches and viewpoints.

The book is divided into four sections. The essays in the first one, «Challenging Methodologies», cover approaches considered by the editors as «marginal» among disability histories. The first essay discusses the fluidity of disability in High and Late Medieval Europe, challenging the pre-supposed link between physical impairment and poverty, and showing what kinds of questions can be raised and answered to with both religious and secular sources. The second chapter is an intriguing case study of the construction of disability in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century newspapers and journals, presenting «narrative» as a category mostly used in the studies based on fictional literary texts, but being equally profitable for non-fictional texts. Also this essay simultaneously shows the diversity in the pre-modern and early modern approaches to the social inclusion of the impaired. The last essay in the section examines blindness in the context of a Dutch residential institution in the twentieth century. Here the author proposes that a sensory approach should be brought more strongly into the historical discussion of disability, also providing some criticism towards the social model and emphasising the importance of body and materialism, as well as the cultural changes in order to bring disability to the centre of historical studies.

In the second part, «Power and Identity», the authors engage with the care of the disabled as well as the delineations of difference and identity. They show how the care-taking of the disabled in the twentieth century both institutionalised the care and how it could influence the identity of an individual and a larger group. Many of the essays in the compilation, but especially the ones in this part, discuss the views of the philosopher Michel Foucault (whose reply in an interview also inspired the title of the book), and how they can be utilised in modern disability studies. The third essay in the section addresses hermaphroditism and the autobiography of a French intersex person Herculine Barbin (1838-1868) from the Foucaultian perspective, presenting it convincingly as an example of the power networks constructing bodies as undesirable and imperfectly human.

The section «Travelling Knowledge» focuses on the ways ideas and concepts of disability are transferred, concluding on the dominance of the Western societies in general, while the agency of disabled people in other areas, mainly in Southern America, are also discussed. Similarly, the Western thought had great influence on how the social care was developed in Israel and in British mandate

Palestine in 1930-56. The interaction resulting in the transformation of concepts within a more limited geographical region is finely highlighted in the discussion about autism and facilitated communication. Autism hardly functions as a disorder, whose societal connotations can be transferred to hold true for other types of impairments as such, but at the same time it provides a fascinating example of how the cultural and medical discourses influence the way different impairments are viewed. Similarly, the essay dealing with the attempts in the early twentieth-century Spain to increase the productivity, and therefore the normality, of the impaired illustrates the effects the medicalization of disability had on the development of new power relationships influencing the everyday lives of the disabled.

The final section, titled as «Emerging Topics», accordingly brings forward four viewpoints that can be seen as having been neglected, or being stimulated by the recent (medico-)historical developments. Here we are again presented with the changing attitudes towards autism, this time through the lens of interviews regarding the disorder, Communism, and the changing Czechoslovakian society. The second essay provides a historiographical survey of musicology and disabled musicians, demonstrating how the changing attitudes towards artists, including the Romantic genius-composer, *castrati*, and the *virtuoso*, have influenced the ways the work of disabled musicians has been viewed —and what deviancies have been seen as «disability». The two most recent decades are covered in the two essays attentively discussing HIV/AIDS as a part of disability history, and the discussion on biopolitics and the ethics of disability.

I have wanted to give a brief summary of the contents of the book to show the diversity of topics and viewpoints it presents, as it also demonstrates the heterogeneity of the field of disability history, and the phenomenon «disability» itself. Here lies the collection's greatest strength, but also its weakness. The editors propose to cover an ambitious topic of European disability histories, but especially from a medievalist's point of view, the emphasis of the collected essays is perhaps unnecessarily modern. Except the very first essay, none of the contributions even refer to pre-modern times, although (and here I have to disagree with the editors), disability history is no longer «neglected» among medieval —or ancient Roman and Greek— studies, and only one of the essays addresses the early modern period. In the concluding remarks, it is asked who could «reveal the history of the deaf in Antiquity or infirmity in the Middle Ages'» although such work, though far from being completed, is and has been conducted increasingly during the past decade. To get a more comprehensive *longue durée* viewpoint, the book would have benefitted from an article

untangling disability at least in the late Antiquity, and some more space could have been given to medieval or early modern scholarship as well.

The volume represents intriguing possibilities for new types of research, using different theoretical approaches. The variety of the articles would have given great possibilities for mutual exchange between the authors, but this is very much missing. As an example, the three essays discussing autism appear as a sub-group within the collection, in which it would have been possible to present more clearly how the methodological and meta-historical reflections could be used crossing the borders between different source materials and geographical settings. Perhaps this kind of mutual interaction would also have given the authors a further chance to reflect what we actually mean when we are talking about «disability». My third —albeit inconsequential— criticism concerns the spelling mistakes, which occur somewhat frequently throughout the book, in one case even in the heading of the chapter. For this, I am apt to blame both the writers/editors and the publisher.

Such minor criticism, however, should not conceal the quality and importance of the articles included in the volume. It presents a valuable and rich collection of scholarship that is an interesting read also for those who are not experts on each particular field. The articles are all written in a convincing and well-articulated manner, and their variety also finely demonstrates the importance of disability history as an established branch of both pre-modern and modern historical studies. ■

Jenni Kuuliala

orcid.org/

Universität Bremen

■ **Manon Parry. *Broadcasting birth control*.** New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; 2013, 192 p. ISBN 978-08-135-61516 (paperback) \$ 24,95.

¿Qué tienen en común Margaret Sanger con el Pato Donald? Lo sabremos después de leer *Broadcasting birth control*, un interesantísimo libro sobre las campañas propagandísticas a favor de la causa de la planificación familiar llevadas a cabo durante el siglo XX. Manon Parry, su autora, en la actualidad profesora de